

memo

TO State Departments of Education

FROM Trevor Packer, Senior Vice President, AP and College Readiness, The College Board

CC

DATE March 15, 2012

RE AP Test Fee Program – 2012 Changes

We are writing to provide you with urgent information about the **changes to the amount of federal funding available to subsidize low-income students' AP Exam fees this spring.**

Congress recently passed the FY2012 Appropriations bill, which reduced the funding for the Advanced Placement Test Fee and Incentive Programs from last year's allocation of \$43 million to \$26.95 million. Given the current budget climate, overall we feel this is a comparatively positive outcome that attests to the value of the federal AP funding in boosting low-income students' college readiness and reducing their college costs.

However, the budget reduction will by necessity reduce the amount of the contribution made by the federal government to each low-income student's AP Exam fees. Below are the full details, which we expect will be formally announced by the US Department of Education in their forthcoming notice inviting applications from states for these funds.

AP Test Fee Program – 2012

- The federal contribution to low-income students has been reduced from \$57 per exam to **\$38 per exam**, with a cap of 3 federally subsidized exams per low-income student in 2012.
 - The College Board contribution to low-income students will increase from \$22 to **\$26 per exam**, with no cap on the number of subsidized exams per low-income student in 2012.
 - This combination of federal and College Board subsidies results in a:
 - **\$15 per exam fee** for low-income students for up to three AP Exams per student this year
 - **\$53 per exam fee** for low-income students for the 4th, 5th, 6th, and additional AP Exams they take this year
 - Several states already require low-income students to pay a portion of their AP Exam fees. The requirement of a nominal student contribution does not appear to have negatively impacted students' decision to take an AP Exam in these states; in fact, exam participation has grown
- [REDACTED] report that having these students contribute towards their exams has

been a positive factor rather than a hardship. These students frequently recognize that for a small investment in high school, thousands of tuition dollars can be saved in college.

- Georgia, New Mexico, Texas, and the District of Columbia will be supplementing the federal and College Board subsidies with their own state or local funds, which will further reduce the AP Exam fees for low-income students in their jurisdiction. We encourage other states, districts, and communities to explore similar options.
- **If your state would like to consider supplementing the federal and College Board subsidies as a way of further reducing this year's \$15/exam fee for low-income students, please do not hesitate to contact Mike Barry at (212) 373-8726 or mbarry@collegeboard.org for information about the number of low-income students likely to take AP Exams in your state this spring.**

Proposed School-Based Strategies to Foster Access to AP

Below are some suggested strategies outlined by schools in states that already require low-income students to pay a portion of their AP Exam fees. These strategies are designed to foster the participation of low-income students in AP Exams:

- **Timing of payment.** Be flexible about when students are required to pay the exam fee. This gives them the time and support to pay when they can.
- **Advance notice.** Give students and parents advance notice to explain the exam fee and communicate the value of AP Exams as an opportunity for them to save money in college. Host a parent night in advance to review the benefits of participating in the AP Program, AP Exam fees, etc.
- **School fundraising.** If the exam fee is too much of a hardship for some students, consider local fundraising efforts to cover the fees.

The U.S. Department of Education will be sending the 2012 AP Test Fee Program grant applications within the next week, communicating this change and providing more details on the application process.

While the changes to the federal budget can bring about challenges, we are hopeful that the information in this letter will help your state maintain and expand participation in AP among traditionally underserved students.

Thank you for your commitment to these – and all – students.

